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Woman's Will:

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A Love-Play in Five Acts,

With Other Poems.

. . . BY . . .

Harry Lyman Koopman.

MOULTON, WENBORNE & CO.,
BUFFALO.

1888.

WOMAN'S WILL,

AND OTHER POEMS.

By the same Author.

ORESTES, AND OTHER POEMS.

16mo, Cloth, pp. 192, Beveled Edges, Price, $1.00.

NOTICES OF THE PRESS.

From The Critic, New York.

"Mr. Koopman may be said, in spite of a certain bookishness, which is allied to affectation, to have 'the root of the matter' in him. He has a strong hold upon the eternal verities, and a high ideal of the poet's calling."

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"When a young maker of verses strives, consciously or unconsciously, after the spirit and form of such masters as Emerson and Tennyson, it is surely something that his work should seem an imitation and not a parody."

From the Book Record, New York.

"These poems could not be called wonderful, but many are worthy. The first, 'Orestes,' is the best and is highly dramatic."

From The University, New York.

"A most pleasant collection of original poems and translations."

From The American, Philadelphia.

"His poems belong to the class that show a cultivated, appreciative mind, trained by literature and reflection to enjoy the poetic and meditative view of life and nature, and lured thereby to set in the tempting, beautifying frame of verse his thoughts and impressions."

From the Burlington (Vt.) Free Press and Times.

"Mr. Koopman's verse is flowing, much of it graceful, some of it finished and genuinely poetical, some of it fragmentary and fugitive, all easy to read and understand."

From the University Cynic, Burlington, Vt.

"'Orestes' resembles somewhat in its plot the 'Electra of Sophocles,' but is original in manner of treatment. 'The Death of Guinevere' is particularly worthy of mention."

WOMAN'S WILL:

A LOVE-PLAY IN FIVE ACTS,

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HARRY LYMAN KOOPMAN.

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TO MISS FLORENCE WICKES.

Princess, if in Ethel's face
Features of thine own thou trace,
Or, in Ethel's heart and mind,
Limnings caught from thee thou find;
Be not startled, Sweet, I pray thee,—
Hues so dull will ne'er betray thee.

July 26th, 1888. *Burlington, Vermont.*

WOMAN'S WILL.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY.

HARLAN, a prince.

EGBERT, son of Emeric.

EMERIC, a nobleman.

ARTHUR, a prince.

ELDRED, a general.

RANULF, nephew of the king.

KING.

EARL.

BAREND, page to Emeric.

ETHEL, sister of Egbert.

WINIFRED.

QUEEN.

Lords, ladies, soldiers and attendants.

A WOMAN'S WILL.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.

A grove. Maidens in white dance on the greensward, forming a ring about ETHEL, and sing.

To his loved one piped the swallow,
Love, come.
'Tis better to fly and follow,
Love, come.
O Love, why tarriest?
The rocky wall is best,
The cliff and high-built nest,
Love, come.

The brooklet sighed to the sunlight,
Love, come.
For my heart is cold and unlight,
Love, come.
With icy pall oppressed,
I cry with laden breast,
O Love, why tarriest?
Love, come.

The violet sobbed to the southwind,
Love, come.
As the rain-wind come, or the drouth-wind,
Love, come.
And, in thine arms caressed,
Uplift and make me blest,
O Love, why tarriest?
Love, come.

ETHEL.

Enough! The sun begins to print the sward
With shadowy leaves. The bluebird's song is hushed.
Let also ours be still. 'Neath yonder trees
Are turfy seats thick piled with velvet moss,
And roots high twisted into oaken chairs,
And thrones of hollowed rock. There will we sit,
And one shall tell a tale of hardihood,
And honor, and the old, heroic love.

At the beginning of ETHEL'S speech the maidens break up the dance, and at the end they go out irregularly. Just as they disappear, HARLAN enters.

HARLAN.

Was it not here? I surely did not dream!
O gold-bright face, which never but in dream,
Waking or sleeping, might I see before,
Now have I seen in truth; the face my heart,
Hungering for beauty with its earliest throbs,
Yet never finding, by a vision stamped,
Took, as the bright gold for a sea-queen coined

Takes majesty and beauty at a blow,
And evermore disdains a meaner form.
But, now I've seen its fair original,
The minted gold is dull and fashionless.
For here I saw it, by this very oak,
And heard therewith so sweet a melody
It seemed her form had twined itself with sound.
That music was no call of singing birds,
Much less the chirp of leaves or creak of boughs ;
It cried, "Love, come," and "Love, why tarriest?"
That was no dream.—Yonder it calls again.
Yea, Love, I come ; O Love, I tarry not.

He goes out.

SCENE 2.

The maidens scattered about the grove, sitting or standing. HARLAN enters at the left, and, at the same time, RANULF, with soldiers, at the right.

HARLAN to ETHEL.

Divinest among women, if indeed
Thou art not all divine, I, least in worth,
But not the least in love and loyalty,
Pledge thee the service of my sword, and wait
Thine absolute commands.

RANULF striking HARLAN.

Be still, base churl.
Another word, and I will strike thee down,
Presumptuous thrall !

HARLAN.

Look rather to thyself.

They fight, and in a moment RANULF is slain. HARLAN slips in making his last stroke, and the soldiers rush upon him from behind and bind him. They lead him away, and bear off the body of RANULF. The ladies follow confusedly; ETHEL lingers.

ETHEL.

Oh, bitter ending of a beauteous day!
Alas, proud man, how quickly thou wast slain!
Now breathing, moving, speaking, combating,
And now a clod.—He had a noble face.
How like a flame his sword flew from its sheath!
I wist not what he said, and yet I think
He spake to me. It all was done so soon.
He praised me, did he not? and offered me
His warrior service. But I know him not.
I wonder why he spake to me. His eyes
Burned as he talked. I never was so looked at
By any man before; yet I have heard
Men speak of love, and men have called me fair.
But they will kill him, for he slew the prince.
But me,—I wonder why he spake to me.

She goes out.

SCENE 3.

The KING and QUEEN on their throne, lords and guardsmen about. An EARL enters.

EARL.

O king, I know not how to speak the speech.
This morn, as we at thy command attended
The ladies at their greenwood revelry,
A stranger broke upon them. He addressed
With speech familiar the lady Ethel;
Prince Ranulf, stepping forward to chastise
His insolence,—My liege, I can no more.

KING.

Go on! He slew the intruder, thou wouldst say.

EARL.

Alas, great king, by him the prince was slain.

KING.

Jest not, I bid thee. Tell me what befell,
And then keep silence.

EARL.

I have told thee truth.

KING.

Who slew the murderer?

EARL.

My lord, he lives.

KING.

Brought ye him bound?

EARL.

He is held bound without.

KING.

Go, bring him in. He shall be straightway sentenced,
His death shall follow swift and terrible.

The EARL goes out, and HARLAN is led in bound.

KING.

Art thou the villain that has done this deed?

HARLAN.

I am no villain, nor have I done aught
A knight may blush to own.

KING.

A knight sayest thou?
And yet didst offer rudeness unto ladies.
For this thou shalt be tortured grievously.

HARLAN.

Rudeness, to ladies offered, and by me!
They lied that told thee. That I did approach
Those ladies I confess; but 'twas with mien
Of most profound respect; and I acknowledge
That with profoundest homage I bespake
The fairest maid among them; after that
All I remember is, that a churl's voice

Berated me, and therewith came a blow,
And then I fought with one o'ertopping me,
And slew him; and with that last stroke I slipped,
And, ere I could recover, was o'erborne
By armed men, and bound; and so am here.

KING.

And hence shalt thou be haled forth to the rack.

The QUEEN kneels before the throne.

QUEEN.

My gracious lord, I beg a gift of thee.

KING.

Sweet queen, is this a time to sue for gifts?
Thou knowest I can deny thee naught; yet, prithee,
Choose out another time for thy request.

QUEEN.

It must be granted now or not at all,
And, if not granted, then thou lovest me not.

KING.

What prophet can foretell a woman's whims?
Have then thy will; but, since I grant it thee,
Perhaps thou wilt do me the grace, in turn,
To name the gift.

QUEEN.

I ask but this man's life.

KING.

Oh, that I gave my promise! Knowest thou not,
That he hath slain the prince, my brother's son.

QUEEN.

My lord, that he hath slain the prince is true,
But true, no less, that him the prince attacked,
And, unprovoked, smote rudely, and then threatened,
And, lastly, sought to slay him.

KING.

Honored spouse,
My word to thee I cannot break, nor yet
Must I so lightly let my kinsman's blood
Flow unavenged. Grant thou this stranger's life,
But on such terms as he shall hardly meet.
Give him some task that no man yet performed,
Failing in which he must yield up his life.

QUEEN.

My lord, since so thy will is, I obey.
Wilt thou bid loose him and then call him hither?

KING.

Unbind the stranger. Hither step, sir knight.

QUEEN.

Rash wanderer, thou hadst even now been slain,
But for my pity that a flame so clear

Should be snuffed out and never light the world.
Tell me thy name and race, and from what land,
On what strange quest thy feet have hither strayed.

HARLAN.

My father is the king of all the South.
I am his only son, Harlan my name;
And from the Southland I have hither come
On love's high quest; and, if I do not err,
I have no more to go. Here ends my search.

QUEEN.

I have not promised thee thy freedom yet.
Ere thou art free thou must perform me that
Which will demand of thee more than thy sword.

HARLAN.

I do not fear thy task. Name it, fair queen.

QUEEN.

Thou shalt go forth, and one year from to-day
Thou shalt return, and either tell me this,
What woman most desires, or yield thy life.

HARLAN.

A year! But now I reckoned life by hours,
A day I then had deemed eternity;
And now thou grantest me a year, twelve months,
In every month four goodly weeks, each week
Of seven long fruitful days for high achievement;

And, after all, I doubt not to perform
The task, and win my life. Most gracious queen,
With grateful homage I accept thy terms.

KING.

What is there equal to a woman's whim?

ACT II.

SCENE 1.

A room in EMERIC'S palace. EMERIC seated. ETHEL, near a window, broidering.

EMERIC.

My daughter, come and take this seat beside me,
For I have something I would say to thee.

ETHEL.

I have no greater pleasure than to listen,
Whenever, in his wisdom and his love,
My father may be pleased to speak to me.

EMERIC.

Dear daughter, thou art now of woman's years,—
At least my eyes and reason tell me so;
Though to my memory it is but an hour
Since first they laid thee in mine arms, and said
Thou wast my child. How like thy mother's brow!
The sunshine always seems to fall upon it;
And with the sunshine truly art thou crowned.

It rays its beams as if their gold would fill
The deep noon of thine eyes. That smile was hers.
It drew me more than welded chains, and bound me
In fetters welcomer than liberty.—
But, what I called thee for was not thy praise,
But speech of weighty import to our house.
My child, the time has come for thee to wed.
Already have three suitors sought thy hand:
The first, a prince, handsome and high in honor,
Heir to the throne of Estland, Arthur, he;—
The second, older, and of battle-fame,
Eldred, the leader of our sovereign's hosts;
In war a lion, but in bowers of peace
Gracious, and sought of many a noble dame.
Between these two thou hast indeed a choice
That cannot miss of honor, but thou hast
Therewith a third, which many would deem worthiest;
For Clovic, the rich merchant from the East,
Hath proffered suit for thee, and sent therewith
Rare gems and silks, a queen might envy thee.
Thou hearest me, my daughter, but thy face
Lightens not at my words. Dost thou ask more?
Thou surely art not prouder than thy sire.

ETHEL.

Nay, father, pride here enters not at all.
It is not pride that makes me hear unmoved
What rather would move pride to deference.
Thou namest wealth and power and sovereignty,

All which I duly hold in high regard,
All which I must admire, but cannot love.
Dear father, can I give my heart to gold?
What is there in a sword to stir my pulse?
Or in a throne, that I should leave thy side?
Can I bestow myself and not my love?

EMERIC.

My daughter, I spake not as slighting love,
But as enhancing it; among three men,
Well-born and brave and noble, must be one
That thou canst love. Yet is the question not
Whom thou canst love, but rather who loves thee.
For love with woman comes in wedded life;
She learns to love; but man loves first or never.
And thou must not forget that, with the great,
Other considerations in a match
Than youthful fancy must obtain regard.
The great wed not as simple men and women.
Their greatness also weds. I trust my child
Does not forget what blood is in her veins.

ETHEL.

That I am Emeric's daughter is an honor
Too great for me one moment to forget;
But I am Egbert's sister.—Dearest brother,
Where in the wide world bend thy steps to-day?—
And more than brother was he ever to me,
I more to him than sister; and we promised

Neither should wed without the other's wish.
He now is far away, and must I wed
Without his knowledge even? He return,—
Would he might now return!—and find me gone,
A stranger's bride? O father, say not so.

EMERIC.

My daughter, I have given forth my word
That one of thy three suitors thou shalt choose,
Or show sufficient reasons for refusal.
So pledged I, confident I did not act
Against my daughter's welfare. Dear my child,
My years are more than thine, my love to thee
More than my love to all the world beside.

ETHEL.

Father, as duty leads me, I obey. Emeric goes out.
Yet reasons, ah! I must not fail to find
Sufficient reasons why I should not choose.

SCENE 2.

The audience room of EMERIC. ETHEL and EMERIC seated. BAREND in waiting. Prince ARTHUR enters with attendants.

EMERIC.

Welcome, most noble prince. My house is honored
By this high presence. Welcome, good my lords.

ARTHUR.

Most great and honored earl, my purpose here
Is known to thee; and thou to me hast deigned
Kindly assurance that I do not stand
Wholly without thy favor. But thy message
Imparted that the furtherance of my suit
Lies wholly in the hands of her it seeks.

EMERIC.

Such is my will; and, if thy purpose hold
My family so high to set in honor,
Here will my daughter listen to thy suit.

ARTHUR.

Unto the fairest the unworthiest
Worthily kneels; yet in another land,
A mighty kingdom parting the two seas,
I am the greatest of all them that serve,
And heir to all men's service. Hosts are mine,
Or will be mine, and ships that bridge the sea;
Palaces, one for every changing month,
And every hall a bower for love's delight.
There princesses await thee to forestall
The wish before it rises to thy lips;
For all this goodly heritage of bliss
I offer unto thee and thee alone.
O lady, sole star shining in my heart,
Lo! here I wait thy gracious, queenly choice.

ETHEL.

That I am honored far beyond my worth,
Most noble prince, I gratefully confess.
But, if thou wilt indulge me, ere I answer,
I too would proffer suit. May I presume?

ARTHUR.

Strange were it such a pleader did not win!
Lady, I listen only to consent.

ETHEL.

I prithee hear me first. My plea is this:
The matter of the ambassage thou bringest
Regarding certain ships reported seized;—
Thou knowest my father is to thee opposed
As minister of our most gracious king,
Him representing in this high dispute.
Wouldst thou, to gain my hand, so favor me,
In honoring my father, as to yield
Thy kingdom's claim, and let the contest lapse?

ARTHUR.

Love rules all things. To please thee I will yield,
For may I with mine own not work my will?

ETHEL.

Then will I wed thee not. My love can go
Only to him that places before love,
Yea, before all things, honor. So I choose.

SCENE 3.

Night. Porch of a palace. ELDRED comes in.

ELDRED.

The slave has played me false. His coward neck
Shall wring for this. Checkmated by a clown!
Hallo!

BAREND, entering.

My lord, I come upon the stroke.

ELDRED.

And saved thyself a stroke by coming on't.
Out with the business. Yesterday she heard
Suit of Prince Arthur. He to-day sailed back,
His embassy unfinished; briefly summoned
By the old king, his father; so 'tis given;
And well his hasty flight confirms thy tale.
I find no fault with this, but with the way
In which thou sayest she rejected him;
'Tis that I like not. But despatch! How fared it
This morning with Sir Longpurse, him o' the gold,
And vulture's beak upon a pigeon's heart?
Have the gems won her? Did she lisp and say
She would be Madam Buzzard? Art thou dumb?

BAREND.

My lord, I haste to speak. He fared but ill.
It was the same scene over. First he scraped,
Then leered, then smirked, and, lastly, offered her
His gold, his ships, his stores, his lands,—his heart.

ELDRED.

His heart, ho! ho! and did he offer with it
A rind of mustard seed to house it in?

BAREND.

She made short work of him. She wrung from him
That he had promised to the Estland king
Vast sums of money in the event of war;
Then asked if he, to crown her father's skill,
And so please her in honoring her sire,
Would break his plighted faith, refuse the gold,
Taking for his reward her hand in marriage.
Of course the money-lender promised her,
And then she spurned him. She's a very devil.
Heaven keep me free from such a shrew as that?

ELDRED.

Peace, fool! But couldst thou learn of any purpose
In these refusals? I feel noway sure.
'Twould look as if she scorned them, choosing me;
And yet I fear her. Did she drop no word
To hint a purpose?

BAREND.

No, not one, unless—

ELDRED.

Well, what? Out with it.

BAREND.

I do fear, my lord.
'Twas but a trifle. What it meant I know not.

ELDRED.

This dagger shall unlock that throat of thine
Unless thou speakest.

BAREND.

I beseech thee, sir,
Remember that the words are hers, not mine.
When Clovic and his suite had left the room,
I heard her give a sigh as if relieved,
Then murmur to herself: "One more is left,
And then I shall be free." I know not what
The words might mean.

ELDRED.

'Tis well thou dost not know.
If thou shalt breathe a whisper of this speech
To any soul, dog of a slave, thou diest.
Begone!

BAREND goes out.

That cursed temper of the wench
I like not. She needs taming. No, I think
I like it after all. It will be sport
To clip those claws, and make that proud head cringe.
I know thy trick. To-morrow thou shalt see
A man the soul of honor, whom not the world,
With all its baubles, wealth, nor power, nor love,
Could ever bend from the most rigid line
Of honor's path. Our cue is "honorable."

SCENE 4.

The audience room of EMERIC, as before. ELDRED and his attendants have entered.

ELDRED.

Most puissant lord, when first I urged my suit
For yon fair hand, as I was bold to do,
Thou answeredst me thy daughter should make choice
Among three men, of whom myself was one.
Yesterday sailed Prince Arthur over sea;
To-day the worthy Clovis hath embarked,
While I, the third, here now present myself.
Though, as a man of honor, I should not wish
The lady's hand to go without her heart,
Nay, rather, would with all my power prevent it,
Yet me love prompts, relying on thy word,
To deem the lady Ethel hath refused
My rivals out of preference for me.
Hope I too rashly, looking for such grace?

EMERIC.

Not rashly, honored sir, but naturally,
Seeing my daughter hath rejected those
That stood before thee. If a man makes choice
Of one from three, and two are reckoned out,
The third must needs be chosen. Noble sir,
I promised thee that from among you three
My daughter should select one for her spouse;
Except on this condition, that she showed
Sufficient reasons for refusing all.

Knowing no cause that should discredit thee,
I wait to see her own thy rightful claim.

ELDRED.

How sayest the lady Ethel? Is her hand
Ready to meet the hand I proffer her?

ETHEL.

My lord, as yet I know not any cause
Why I should not accept thine offered suit.
Well should I deem her happy that might call
Eldred, the famous general, her husband.
Yet, since I would not give my hand unless
I knew my heart should never wish it back,
I would, if might be, test thy love. Pray tell me
If thou dost love me so much that for me
Thou wilt forsake, forget all other love,
Yea, though thy love were plighted to another,
Not even that should bind thee, but thou wouldst,
For me, give up and leave her utterly.
Ask I too much, or do I set too high
A standard of devotion for a man?
Perhaps not so, and yet too much for me.

Aside.

This works not as before. I greatly fear
That he will stand the test and I must wed him.

ELDRED.

Lady, strange terms thou namest; such as I,—
Permit me to speak plainly,—would not hear

From any other lips. Fair as thou art,
And fairest art thou among women born,
Not at such cost would I secure thy love.

ETHEL.

Then dost thou love me not?

ELDRED.

Lady, I love thee
All man in honor may. More would be less.

ETHEL.

Then, noble sir, thou hast absolved me from
All reason why I should reject thy hand.
So, as my father bids me, here do I—

WINIFRED rushes in and throws herself at EMERIC's feet.

WINIFRED.

Justice, great sir, justice against this man!

ELDRED.

The devil! Winifred, how camest thou here?
Sir, I know not this woman. 'Tis some trick
To cheat me of thy daughter's promised hand.

EMERIC.

Thou already hast condemned thyself.
Thou knowest her; but, if thou knewest her not,
No man shall ever say that I or mine
Have played him false, whatever his excuse,
And hold my friendship. Go! Not if thou wert

Ten thousand times thyself, shouldst thou obtain
My daughter's hand, after a slur like that.

ELDRED and his suite go out.

Now, lady, tell us who thou art. Nay, rise,
Thou seest none but friends.

WINIFRED.

Most noble sir,
I am the hapless Winifred, who loved
The general Eldred, and who thought herself
By him beloved in turn.

ETHEL.

The lady Winifred!
She died a year ago. Oh! she is mad.

WINIFRED.

Lady, I am not mad, but I am she.
I knew not whether men proclaimed me dead,
I only knew that I was dead to earth.
Lord Eldred wooed me, quickly won my heart
With his fair speeches and his seeming love.
But when we were to wed; yea, when I thought
The morrow should have seen me crowned a bride,
I was borne off at night by masked men,
And carried hastily o'er unknown ways
Into a land I knew not, to a castle
Where all these months I was a prisoner,
High in a tower; and there should now have been,

Had not a wandering knight, as once I sang,
Heard my sad voice, and with an arrow shot
In at my casement offered me his help.
That night he climbed, but how I cannot tell,
Up to my window. There he heard my tale,
And, hearing, promised, on his knightly faith,
To rescue me, and bear me to what land
I wished to go; and knowing here had come
Lord Eldred, I besought him lead me here.
He entered not the city, but without
Left me; and when I asked how I might pay
His timely service, bade me answer him
This question: "What a woman most desires?"
That moment I said "Justice," though I think—
Why, lady, dost thou know him?

ETHEL.

Nay, go on.
I pray thee tell me further of thy life.

WINIFRED.

But little more remains. I heard one say
Lord Eldred on this morning proffered suit
To Emeric's daughter, and I hastened here,
To save her, as I thank just heaven I have.

ETHEL.

Oh! I will join thy thanks. But one word more,
And I should have accepted him I hate.
But said the knight no more?

WINIFRED.

No more, but, turning,
I saw him wave a kiss toward a grove
That stands without the town. I wondered at it,
Yet marked it well.

ETHEL.

Oh! thou shalt be to me
A sister, and shalt teach me, wilt thou not?
That song that in the tower drew his steps?

WINIFRED.

Lady, I will, but do not ask me now,
My poor voice is too tremulous with joy.

ETHEL.

Oh! no, not now, for thou art travel-worn
And sick with many sorrows; but thy griefs
Shall trouble thee no more, my sister dear.

ACT III.

SCENE 1.

A room in EMERIC'S palace. ETHEL and WINIFRED.

WINIFRED.

How plain it all comes out! In mine own land
Much had I heard of Lady Ethel's beauty;
And now I see it, marvel not it drew

Lord Eldred's thoughts away from my poor self.
If he had told me that he loved thee more,
I wonder what I should have done. Such love
Had I for him, I would have done aught else;—
Should I have yielded place to thee? I know not.
He clearly thought not so; and, since he scarce
Could openly cast me off, he had me seized,
Borne far away, and given out for dead.
Then he was free to pay his court to thee.
Hadst thou rejected him before I came,
Would he have then returned to me? If so,
And I had known naught of his treachery,
I should have loved him still, although I knew
I was a prisoner by his command.
He would have told some tale and I believed it.
But now I wonder that I ever loved him.
He bears no quality that stirs my love.
Henceforth I will love only thee. To men
My heart is locked, and thou shalt keep the key.

ETHEL.

Oh! dost thou love me so? Before thou camest,
I wandered lonely, with no friend to love,
None to love me, and share my heart's best life.
More than my friend, my sister, art thou now;
And we will naught withhold of all our lives.
But, dear, that song that thou didst promise me,
Wilt thou not sing it now?

WINIFRED.

Oh! it was naught;
The merest trifle. It was more my sobs
Than what I sang that drew the noble knight;
And they are now forgot. But, if thou wilt,
Reach me thy lute, and I will sing the song.

Come, sorrow, come,
For love is dead.
Glad lips, be dumb,
For love is dead.
Come, shy and darkling sorrow;
Delight shall know no morrow.
Love is dead.

Flow, tear-drops, flow,
For love is dead.
Blithe heart, beat low,
For love is dead.
No joy shall stir thy pulses,
Sad heart, which pain convulses.
Love is dead.

Die, bright hopes, die,
For love is dead.
Beside him lie,
For love is dead.
Where true-love lies interrèd,
Oh! let me too be buried.
Love is dead.

ETHEL.

Before I heard thee sing I wondered how
A song could have such power to summon help;
But, now I have heard thee, I wonder rather
The very trees did not stretch out their arms
To let thee down and shelter thee from ill.
But I could never sing so. On my lips
Thy song would hardly move a menial's praise.
Oh! come here to the window. How the birds
Carol beneath the dewy April dawn!
The sky is one blue gem; the sward a brooch
Of diamonds upon an emerald ground.
The leaves peep forth. The little brook steams up,
As if hard breathing with its sudden haste.
Look, out beyond the gate a beggar comes,
Ragged and footsore, leaning on a staff.
He hastens now, and eyes the towers as if
He looked to find here comfort and relief.
Oh! there rush out the hounds, the cruel beasts!
They will not slay him, but will worry him.
The hunters set them on. Oh, hearts of stone,
Who laugh to see the terror of the wretch!
Foremost rush those two bloodhounds latest bought.
I'll look no more.

WINIFRED.

O sister, look again.
Just as the two leaped at him the whole pack
Sprang upon them, and slew them in a flash;

And now they fawn upon him. There, he waves
His hand toward me.

ETHEL.

O sister, let me look.
I know that step. It is my brother.

Waves her handkerchief to him.

Dear,
I cannot wait. Egbert, Egbert has come.

She rushes out.

WINIFRED.

Her brother! Why, she never said before
She had a brother. Oh! that spoils my hopes.
I do not like these brothers. I am sure
That I shall like her brother least of all.
For he will scorn me, and will steal away
Her love from me. I will not meet him now.

She goes out.

SCENE 2.

The same. EMERIC and ETHEL come in with EGBERT newly clad.

ETHEL.

But, brother, why is this? Where are the rest:
Thy noble comrades that went forth with thee
To seek new wars?—as if there were not wars
Enough without going forth to seek for them.

EGBERT.

How sayest thou? Have none of them returned?
O wretch! Have I alone of all escaped?
How should I merit this?

EMERIC.

Nay, praised be God,
Who hath returned thee safe into mine arms.
Yet how befell it that ye prospered not?

EGBERT.

We joined the island king as we had planned,
And were set high in honor in his host;
A prize that cost us dear. For, when the shock
Of battle smote on his outnumbered force,
Its great wave rolled quite over all the van,
And swallowed us, but not before our swords
Had made a crimson eddy in its tide.
But all in vain. The crested wave rolled on
And swept beyond us, and the field was lost.
Then we that lived were dragged away in triumph.
Four months a dungeon I endured. One day
I was led forth, as I supposed, to die;
But only, as I found, to be conveyed
Unto a grislier fortress in the hills.
My hands were bound behind me, and I walked
With twelve strong spearmen hedging me about.
You well may guess my thoughts were on escape;
And every clump and glen and woodland path

I scanned with eager eyes, as if its depths
Might hide some shelter or release for me.
It was high noon, and I was footsore, choked,
And sick at heart. I thought we soon must halt;
When, looking up, I saw a single knight
Armed only with a sword. He had stood still,
As if to let us pass, but, seeing me,
He seemed to know me, and sprang forth and cried
With awful voice, "Where do ye lead this man?"
The leader of the twelve stepped back. Then I
Made out to falter, "Good sir, save thyself;
Thou canst not save us both." The soldiers then
Couched spears and started on. I cannot tell
The deeds that followed, for I saw and knew,
Yet stood as one in dream. At last a sword
Passed through my bonds; I saw four spearmen flee;
Then heard a cheery voice say, "Brother knight,
'Twere best to arm thyself and fly with me.
Yon couriers will bring an answer soon."
So to the hills we sped, and there for weeks
Dodged their pursuit, and ever worked our way
Homeward by stealth;—so I at length am here.

ETHEL.

Oh! praised be God! But, what of the good knight?
I think I see him, a scarred warrior,
Grizzled and huge, and, even in his smiles,
More terrible than gentle. Were he here,
I would go clasp his hand, and with my tears
Thank him for giving me my brother safe.

EGBERT.

Poor fellow, it's a pity thou canst not.
'Twould make a pretty tableau ; Ethel here,
Springtime in blossom, we will say ; the knight,
Winter, with snows of maybe twenty years ;
His black eyes burning as I saw them burn,
When first he spoke to me of thee.

ETHEL.

Of me!
Who? I was talking of the good old knight
That saved thy life.

EGBERT.

And I of the good youth
That rescued me. He is as young as I,
And not so tall. His hair is black as jet.
Almost the first words that he said to me
Were these: "I do not think I should have dared,
Hadst thou not looked like her." And when I asked,
And found out who this wondrous she might be,—

EMERIC.

My children, I must leave you now. I know
Ye have a thousand little confidences.
I am content to know my son is here.

ETHEL.

But what was thy knight doing? Had some quest
Led him into that country?

EGBERT.

Yes, he had
The craziest errand ever man went on:
To find out—bless the mark!—what woman wants.
I think he will be gray before he knows.
But oh! my sister dear, how glad am I
To find thee here my sister as before,
Not carried off to be some lordling's wife!
Thou spoil'st all other women, or spoil'st me
For them. I wish no other happiness
Than to live here and have thee with me still.

ETHEL.

O flatterer! But yet, for all thy words,
Before I know it, I shall see thee wed.

EGBERT.

Sister, thou wilt not see me wed, unless
Thou first desert me. Then, in self-defense,
Or disappointment, I may choose a mate
To make my life less lonesome.

ETHEL.

Wilt thou swear it?
I do not think I shall believe it else.

EGBERT.

I swear it on my faith. No other woman
Can ever call me from my sister's side;

Nor was there ever woman in the world
Thy lightest whisper would not draw me from.

ETHEL.

Well, we shall see. Thou hast another sister
To please thee now; one worthier than I.

EGBERT.

What dost thou mean?

ETHEL.

That I have found a friend,
Beautiful, sweet, who is my sister sworn,
And must be thine too.

EGBERT.

Humph! I want no other.
What is she like? But, then, I do not care;
I shall not fancy her.

ETHEL.

Oh! yes, thou wilt.
Her voice is like the sound that comes when bells
Have ended ringing. She has wondrous hands,
Which can make all things beautiful to see.
Her hair is like the darkness, and her eyes
Shine like two deep and starlit mountain lakes,
When the low moon is hid. Like her! I know
That thou wilt love her.

EGBERT.

Thou art quite too bad.
An Ethiop! I thank thee; none for me.
Now thou mayst go and see thy black-a-moor.
I'm not so dainty; gold will do for me.

He kisses her hair and goes out.

SCENE 3.

Same. WINIFRED seated by a window, drawing in a vellum-bound book.

WINIFRED.

Thus far I've 'scaped him bravely. Oh! he's not
So very bad, at least as brothers go.
Just now, when he went striding down the lawn,
He looked,—dear me! the likeness will not come.
The tower is good; the trees stood so around;
But, when I try to draw the noble knight,
It looks more like,—no, this is how he stood.

She draws intently. EGBERT comes in.

EGBERT.

I think that here I shall be safe from her.
Who can it be? Is this,—let me not breathe,
Lest I disturb her and she take to flight.
Oh, how divinely droop those veils of jet!
What eyes they must conceal! I will speak to her,
And then she will look up; mayhap will smile.

Lady, I fear I do intrude. I knew not
That any one was here. I will withdraw.

WINIFRED, startled, lets fall her book.

WINIFRED.

Lord Egbert is most welcome. It is I
Am the intruder.

EGBERT, picking up the book.

Lady, I beseech
That I may not disturb thee; if I do,
Truly I never shall forgive myself.
Much had my sister told me of the skill
Her friend the beauteous Winifred possesses.
Were it too bold in me to ask for leave
To look upon her lovely handiwork?
Alas! I interrupt. Lady, I go.

WINIFRED.

'Twould ill repay Lord Egbert's looking at,
The poor daub I have sketched, but, if he will,
It lies before him.

EGBERT.

How divinely fair!
It is the life itself. Yon fortress glooms,
As if its weight would crush the looker's heart.
The knight here in the foreground, with the sword,—
I surely know him. 'Tis my rescuer,
The noble Harlan.

WINIFRED.

Oh! dost thou know him?
Thy rescuer, as he was mine! Oh! speak
And tell me of him.

EGBERT.

Gracious lady fair,
If I so interrupt, I must not stay.
Oh! might I see thee now complete thy task.
I always liked old castles, most of all
A castle in a wood. The light is bad.
Is that not better?

WINIFRED.

Very much, my lord.
I have but just a line or two to add,
And, if I may go on,—

EGBERT.

Do so, I pray,
And let me see the picture thou wilt make.

Aside.

How art would limp that tried to picture her!

ETHEL starts to enter, but stops at the door unnoticed, on seeing the pair.

ETHEL.

Brother, I did not look to see thee here.—
Perhaps that whisper was too low!—Thy pardon,
Dear brother, but I came to ask of thee,—
Still deaf!—Dear Egbert, wilt thou answer me?

WINIFRED.

My lord, thy lady sister speaks to thee.

EGBERT.

Oh! speak again. How words become thy lips!
Nay, keep that smile.

ETHEL, laying her hand on his shoulder.

Brother, this is too bad.
Thrice have I called thee and thou hast not heard;
And still thou starest. It is I, thy sister.

EGBERT.

Oh! Ethel, pray excuse me. I must go.
I have important business at the court.

He goes out.

ETHEL.

So sits the wind! They say a woman runs
Only to be pursued. O naughty minx,
To steal my brother's heart before my eyes!
I thought the house deserted; Winifred
Not to be found, and Egbert disappeared.
I did not think to find you both at once.
If I were not the best friend in the world,
I think I should be jealous. Oh! I know,
Of course it all means nothing. That's the way.
But, out of nothing how much sometimes comes!

WINIFRED steals out.

I wish it, and yet half I wish it not.
To me indeed comes nothing, but not thus.

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.

Porch of EMERIC's palace. Moonlight. EGBERT and WINIFRED walking with their arms about each other.

WINIFRED.

When didst thou first begin to like me, dear?
It now is two whole weeks since thy return.
When in that time didst thou first think of me?

EGBERT.

To like thee? think of thee? Oh, gracious heavens!
To call such love as mine by names like those!
Like thee! I loved thee from my inmost soul
The instant I beheld thee. Not a wink,
Not the white sword-edge of a lightning flash,
Could come between the time I knew thee not
And the blest time when I was mad for thee.
I lost my heart so quick I never knew
That I had lost it, till, sometime next day,
I tried to learn a hunting song by heart,
And found I hadn't any.

WINIFRED.

Oh! for shame,
To trifle with me so, when thou knowest well
I cannot hide my love. Before we own
We love a man we have him for our slave;
After that fatal moment we are his.

EGBERT.

Thou speakest but to try me. Name the thing
I will not do for thee, save only one.

WINIFRED.

Ah! so there is one thing thou wilt not do.
Well, well, a woman must learn, I suppose.
But what is this rare thing, this sacrifice?
Tell me that I may try not wish for it.

EGBERT.

I'd better not have mentioned it. I meant
I gladly would do aught for thee save—wait.

WINIFRED.

Well, I will not detain thee. I am sure
That I can find my way in without help.

EGBERT.

O tease, thou knowest I did not mean that.
I spoke of waiting till our wedding day.

WINIFRED.

Oh! is that all? I hope I shall not task
Thy patience too severely; but indeed,
Among the favors I had thought to crave,
That truly was not one.

EGBERT.

Oh! I must pay
The lips that spoke those words. We'll wed to-morrow.

WINIFRED.

Impetuosity, thy name is man.
I could not wed to-morrow. Oh! I pray
Be not so urgent. Let me have more time.
Nay, set the utmost limit of thy patience,
And that I promise not to go beyond.

EGBERT.

Wilt promise, promise faithfully?

WINIFRED.

I will.

EGBERT.

The day after to-morrow.

WINIFRED.

Thou dost jest.

EGBERT.

No, I speak sober earnest. Now, bethink,
I have thy promise.

WINIFRED.

Oh! I see no way
For my escape. Well, if I must, I will.

EGBERT.

Alas! I never thought. I cannot wed
Before my sister.

WINIFRED.

Oh! that is too bad.
I mean I'm glad. But how should this be so?

EGBERT.

The day that I returned, being overjoyed
To find my sister here, unwedded still,
For we were always either's dearest mate,
I spoke my joy, and said no woman e'er
Had drawn me from her side or ever should;
And when she laughed, and said I soon would leave her,
I swore I never would till she were wed,
Yea, swore upon my faith;—and that is how.

WINIFRED.

But, has she not some lover? Though she said
We two should have no secrets, of one thing
She hath not spoken. When I talk of love,
She laughs or sighs and speaks of something else;
And yet, I almost think she is in love.

EGBERT.

With whom? oh! tell me. I will seek him out,
Though he were sworn my foe; and, if I find
He does not hate her, she shall hear from him.
Tell me his name.

WINIFRED.

Why, dear, I thought thou knewest,
It is the noble Harlan.

EGBERT.

Of all men
The very one that I should soonest choose;
And well I know he is in love with her.
But, oh! where shall I find him?

WINIFRED.

What's to-day?

EGBERT.

Tuesday.

WINIFRED.

I mean of the month.

EGBERT.

The last but one.

WINIFRED.

Why, 'tis on May-day that the prince returns,
To render of his quest. To-morrow night,
I think, if thou shouldst walk within the grove
That fronts the city gate, him thou wouldst find.

EGBERT.

'Tis done. I'm sure that I shall find him there.
Then on the morrow who knows what may hap?
But, sweet, the halved moon dips below the trees.
Would I might clasp thee always! but thine eyes
I know are heavy; and I must be kind

As well as fond. Oh! for the happy time
When night shall part us even less than day.

They go in.

SCENE 2.

A grove. HARLAN comes in.

HARLAN.

Oh! blessed spot where first I saw her face.
My heart leaps up at very sight of it.
Ah! where may she be now? Wedded, I fear.
Yea, may be certain of it. Such a prize
Would scarcely go another year unwon.
Yet hope will burn when reason is blown out.
Oh, might I see her now and hear her voice!

ETHEL comes in disguised as a witch.

ETHEL.

Hold, sir knight, I have a word for thee.

HARLAN.

Horrible creature, what have I to do
With such as thou? Thou knowest naught of me.

ETHEL.

I know thy past and future. This is thrice
Thou hast approached this grove. Since the first time,
Thou hast seen many lands, and hast slain men,
And rescued captives. Two of them I see,
A fair-haired youth, a dark-eyed maiden fair.

HARLAN.

Whence camest thou by this knowledge? Thou hast dealt
With arts forbidden. Speak, I pray, and go.
What is thy business with me?

ETHEL.

Thy long quest
Thou hast not yet performed. Thou knowest not
The answer thou art seeking.

HARLAN.

Beldame, there
I have thee in the wrong. I know the thing.

ETHEL.

So thou dost know what woman most desires.

HARLAN.

The horrid witch! she knows my inmost life.
Woman most wishes to have her own way.

ETHEL.

And wilt thou risk thy life on this reply?

HARLAN.

Why, so I will.

ETHEL.

I tell thee thou art wrong.
A woman's heart is higher tuned than that.

If I will tell thee now the answer true,
Wilt thou here promise me to do to-morrow
The thing that I shall ask?

HARLAN.

I will, unless
Thou askest more than I have power to do.

ETHEL.

Then hark, and I will tell thee.

She whispers in his ear and darts off.

HARLAN.

She is right.
How meanly had I deemed of womankind!
But who comes here? It is my noble friend,—
Egbert!

EGBERT, entering.

Prince Harlan, I give thanks to heaven
That I behold thee here.

HARLAN.

Not more than I
That I am now assured of thy return.
But, fellow-soldier, how does life by thee?
Thou seemest as in trouble.

EGBERT.

No, not I.
I never was so happy; and my joy
Is all a gift from thee.

HARLAN.

A gift from me!
Ha, ha! thou hast not yet forgot thy jest.
I think thou wouldst be merry on the block,
Or at the altar.

EGBERT.

Thou art guessing close.
Rememberest thou the lady Winifred,
Whom thou didst rescue and bring safely here?

HARLAN.

The star-eyed maiden with the music voice?
Who that once saw her ever could forget?
Dost thou too know her?

EGBERT.

She is my betrothed.
Had it not been for thee we ne'er had met;
And I had missed of heaven upon earth.

HARLAN.

Give me thy hand. Thou art a lover now,
And knowest how I love. Betrothed! O friend,
Thy joy I grudge not, but I envy thee.
Ah! now thy face grows lighter. Tell me, pray,
What was the trouble overcast thee so.

EGBERT.

Dost thou still love my sister?

HARLAN.

O ye heavens,
Bear witness if in one least flitting thought
My heart has ever ceased to worship her.

EGBERT.

Thou canst not guess the joy thou givest me.
Know that, with all a lover's list to wed,
I may not till my sister is a wife.
So I have sworn. Dost thou not catch my drift?

HARLAN.

Pardon my dullness, but I fail to mark
How my continued love for her can help.

EGBERT.

Why, man, wilt thou not wed her? Does thy love
Stop short, content with loving?

HARLAN.

O my friend,
Do not so trample on a lover's heart;
For what am I to her?

EGBERT.

If I can judge,
Ethel returns thy love.—I thought perhaps
It might be welcome news.

HARLAN.

But still I doubt.
Yet I will doubt not wholly, so assured.
Oh! tell me of her. Is she still the same?
No harm hath come to her within the year?
No illness? Doth she ever speak of me?
How can I wait until I see her face!

EGBERT.

She often speaks of thee. Her health is good.
But whether she has changed within the year
I know not, having seen her scarce two weeks.

HARLAN.

Of whom hast thou been talking? Thou hast known
Thy sister, surely, more than two short weeks.

EGBERT.

Oh! Ethel? She is well. I think she is.
I thought thou spakest of Winifred. But, come,
To-night my father's house must shelter thee.
There canst thou see my sister and ask her.

HARLAN.

I may not go. My errand bade return
In just one year; and that to-morrow brings.

EGBERT.

Then will I couch here with thee; and the stars
Shall listen while we talk of days foregone,

And nights when thus we slept beneath their beams,
Comrades in danger as to-night in love.

They prepare to lie down in the grove.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The KING and QUEEN on their throne. Nobles about them.

QUEEN.

My lord, I think thou wonderest why to-day
These ladies hold not revel in the wood.

KING.

Why, what's to-day?

QUEEN.

The first of May, my lord,
And blithe and bright as ever May-day shone.

KING.

Why, yes, it is strange that they bide within.
But, hold, to-day comes thine adventurer back,
Or, rather, comes not. Many a good long mile,
I'll warrant he has put behind himself.
An errant knight! An arrant knave he was.
Why did I ever let him slip my grasp?
Another time I shall be suddener.

QUEEN.

But, good my lord, the knight will come to-day.
It is in waiting for him all are here.
Then, if he answers not my question right,
His life is forfeit, even as before;
And, ah! I fear he will not answer it.

KING.

And, ah! I know thy scapegrace will not come.
HARLAN comes in.
Well, I'll be blest! The fools are not all dead.

HARLAN.

Most gracious sovereign, gracious lady fair,
I come to make report upon my quest.

QUEEN.

Thou hast returned upon the very day,
Proving thy knightly honor; and I trust
Thine answer will thy wisdom prove no less.
Art ready now the answer to declare?

HARLAN.

Most gracious lady, when it pleases thee
I will reply with what poor wit I have.

QUEEN.

Then here, in this high presence, speak, sir knight,
And tell what thing a woman most desires.

HARLAN.

What woman most desires is one to love.

QUEEN.

Alas! thou hast not answered me aright.
What woman most would have is her own way.

HARLAN.

Most gracious queen, if I have answered wrong,
I wait the penalty of my mistake;
But, if I can approve mine answer right,
Shall it be counted for acquittal still?

QUEEN.

Speak on; it shall if thou canst prove it right.

HARLAN.

The noblest creature of God's handiwork,—
Standing in this fair presence, can I deem
That noblest of God's creatures aught but woman?

QUEEN.

Thus far the ladies will gainsay thee not.

HARLAN.

The noblest impulse of the human heart,
Is it to love another or itself?
May I presume to question?

QUEEN.

Without doubt
It is to love another.

HARLAN.

Then, fair queen,
The deepest longing of the worthiest,
What is it else than the most worthy longing,—
Woman's desire for one to love?

QUEEN.

'Twould ill
Become me in this presence to deny
The praises thou to woman hast ascribed.
For, if thine answer is not true, at least
It ought to be; it were far better true;
It shall be true henceforth. I here proclaim
Thou hast made answer rightly, and art free.

HARLAN bows and is about to speak, when ETHEL enters disguised as before.

ETHEL.

Sir knight, the promise thou didst make to me.

HARLAN.

Well, what wilt have? I own the pledge I gave.

ETHEL.

What dost thou own? What didst thou promise me?

HARLAN.

I promised I would do for thee to-day
One thing that thou shouldst ask, if so I could.

ETHEL.

He owns the pledge. I bid thee marry me.

HARLAN.

Good mother, thou art jesting. Pray, bethink
This is no place for jests.

ETHEL.

I do not jest.
I have thy promise; thou must marry me.

QUEEN.

Shame on thee, foul old woman. Seest thou not
How wrong a thing thou askest? Choose some gift
Befitting thee. The knight will keep his word,
But do not ask so base a sacrifice.

ETHEL.

I have his promise, and I know my wish.
What hinders that he should not wed with me?

EGBERT.

This is too horrible! Foul witch, begone!
Here, take this gold, and get thee from our sight.

ETHEL.

Take back thy gold. I've spoken my desire.

EGBERT to HARLAN.

Comrade, thou wilt not wed this horrid witch.
Such promise is no promise. Bid her go.
Think of my sister, and thy love for her.
Thou canst not give this creature any love.

HARLAN.

I cannot break my word, though hell should yawn.
O heavenly face that smiled on me but now,
Farewell, I must not look on thee again!
Thou fiend in woman's shape, here is my hand.
My heart is hid where thou canst never reach.

ETHEL.

Aha! be not so sure. All in good time.

She leads him out.

SCENE 2.

A room. HARLAN comes in with ETHEL still in disguise.

ETHEL.

Well, husband, dear, how likest thou that new name?

HARLAN.

Husband! Why, scarce in darkness of the night
Have I dared even dream to hear myself
Called by that name. I've tried to fit that word
To her sweet lips; but they would never speak.
Woman, torment me not. I cannot guess
Why thou hast picked me out to torture me.

Thou knowest I loathe thee. Thou hast but my name,
My love thou canst not win; for all my love,
Yea, to a thousand-fold in bankruptcy,
Is spent on one that I shall never see
Never again. My life has ended here;
And I am dead; and this is hell. One thing
I'm thankful for;—'tis out of sight of heaven.
Perhaps I shall forget; in time may think
That this is heaven, that smoke is cooling breeze,
And fire and ashes May-time violets.
Fool, that I did not spurn thee when thou camest!
I should have saved myself without thy words,
And easier, and should have saved besides
The heart that died when thou didst clutch on me.
Yes, there is something more that I have gained;
I had not thought of that. No longer now
Have I to fear her coldness. No more nights
Of feverish doubt, and days of faltering hope!
The lover's pangs shall wring me nevermore.
Oh, hapless lot, wedded to one I hate!
I never thought it might be so with her,
Had I prevailed, and she accepted me.
She now is safe from that fate,—at my hands.
Might she have come to loathe me as I loathe
This miserable hag, and yet must feel
There's no release while beats the sickened heart?
If I knew that, I rather would be tied
To this disgust, than have her heavenly self
My hourly mate, smuggling up prayers for death.

ETHEL.

Thou makest rare long speeches, and it's time
For my turn now. Thy words are strange to hear.
Now tell me plain which thou wouldst rather have,
That I should be as fair as that slim lass,
And loathe thee, but be still thy bounden wife,
Or love thee, but be loathesome as I am.

HARLAN.

Foul as thou art, I would not bid thee change.
Even heaven may cost too dear.

ETHEL.

Now think again.
Picture her as when last she smiled on thee,
Then look at me, and think I have the power
To be as she is, but must hate thee so.
Now wilt thou have her, stroke that golden hair,
And bid those red lips kiss thee when thou wilt,
But loathe thee, though they do not disobey?
Then look at me, and think upon my love.

HARLAN.

What devil is in thy brain to tempt me so!
Thou art my wife, and she is safe from me.
Not even she could tempt me wrong her so.

ETHEL, going up to HARLAN.

I never dreamed that human heart could love
As I love thee. O husband, let me be

Thy loving wife. Oh! do not spurn me so,
Else I shall die.

HARLAN.

Her voice! Whence comes that voice?
Oh! I am mad, this grief has turned my brain.

ETHEL.

I had forgot. Throws off her disguise.
Dear husband, look on me.
Am I not fair as she? She never dreamed
Of love as I love thee. I am thy wife.
Oh! look on me. Must I plead for a kiss,
My bridal kiss, and yet be frowned upon?

HARLAN turns, and, seeing her, starts back; then kisses her passionately.

HARLAN.

If this be madness, let me ne'er be healed.
Who whispers "doctor" is mine enemy.
Wonder of wonders since the world began,
To find that hell is heaven after all!
But, still I'm not so mad but I am sure
That this is madness.

ETHEL.

Harlan,—

HARLAN.

So I heard
My name from those lips that I saw in dreams.
Kisses her.
But long live madness if it bears such fruit!

ETHEL.

Thou art not mad. See here where lie the mask,
The robes I wore when I was playing witch.

She picks up the mask and holds it before her face. HARLAN shudders, tears it off, and embraces her.

HARLAN.

For all the mask is off the witchcraft stays ;
And much I fear I never shall escape.
Now the old awe comes back. Tell, me, I pray,
What thou art now to me.

ETHEL.

Thy loving wife.

They walk up and down with their arms about each other, HARLAN venturing occasional caresses.

O love, I wonder thou canst smile on me.
I am not worthy of thy tenderness.
Oh ! canst thou e'er forgive me ? But, indeed,
I did not doubt thine honor. What I sought
Was to have all the world confess it too.
But, is thy love so great that, after all,
Thou canst forgive me ? Oh ! I blush to guess
What thou must think of me.

HARLAN.

I think thou art
The fairest, sweetest, noblest wife on earth ;
And when I see thy fault I will forgive.

EGBERT and WINIFRED, in exactly the same attitude as the others, come in without seeing them.

WINIFRED.

I've wept mine eyes dry. Oh! the poor, poor girl,—
I know she loved him.

EGBERT.

Yes, and poor, poor knight!

The two couples meet face to face.

HARLAN.

Egbert!

EGBERT.

Ethel how art thou with him?
Where is that hideous witch, his wife?

HARLAN.

His wife
Is here, and even more a witch than then.

WINIFRED.

Ethel, wast thou the witch?

ETHEL.

I am his wife.
I had almost forgot about the witch.

WINIFRED.

Then, Egbert, now,—

EGBERT.

Ah, dearest, now, indeed !

Maidens in white come in, surrounding the group, and sing.

In truth and love,
With light above,
When the morn is bright,
Let hearts unite,
With joy thereof.

Tell doubt good-bye,
Bid sorrow fly ;
The night is past,
The sun at last
Laughs in the sky.

Bid blessing fall
On bower and hall,
Where lives that blend
With joy may end
As one day, all.

For love is strong
O'er guile and wrong,
And hearts that weep
Shall love make leap
With dance and song.

Additional Poems.

LE LION COUCHANT.

Camel's Hump, from Burlington.

Majestic lion, stretched before the gate
Of Morning, where all day thou keepest guard,
Nor slumberest when over thee the starred
Empanoplied constellations pass in state;
Still dost thou loom in heaven grim as great,
Save when the tender Morning hath unbarred
Her purple portals; or when, o'er the scarred
Sad earth, the Sunset smiles to bid thee wait.
Crowned with the snows, the thunder at thy feet,
Thou lookest down upon the centuries,
August, immortal! while below thee fleet
Man's generations, and their agonies,
Raptures, hopes, fears, defeats and triumphs greet
Thy changeless calm with daily new surprise.

BROWNELL.

None e'er like him from war's resounding thong,
Loosed the lean, rhyme-winged, thought-barbed
shaft of song.

TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

Thou hast the antique beauty that slays men
With utter longing. Such Greek Helen wore,
Which drew a thousand ships the blue sea o'er,
With all their hosts that sailed not back again.
O blossom face, uptilted to the ken
Of dazzled heaven! What were stars before
Shut their weak eyes; the blanched moon shines no more;
Noon, when thou steppest forth, was night till then.
Oh, clouds and darkness! Yet, if I but might
Depict thy beauty as it shines on me,
All after ages would extol its light,
And honor me forever, praising thee.
Oh! happy lot, to live in death's despite,
Linked to thy beauty's immortality.

ON LAURA'S PICTURE.

This is the face that, over sea and land,
Drew Horace more than mighty Rome at hand.

KEATS.

His name was writ in water,—and the dint
Of pity froze the fickle waves to flint.

His name was writ in water,—and has gone
To every shore the wide sea touches on.

ON MRS. PRIEST'S READING.

The perfect orchestra its prelude made;
And then she read; next time the music brayed.

OPPOSITION.

Help in opposition find,
As storm-clouds rise against the wind.

PROPORTION.

'Tis distance lends *proportion* to the view,
And dwarfs all Asia to a suffering Jew.

THE DYNAMITE GUN.

A Prophecy.

"Love one another," loving Jesus said;
And, steeped in slaughter, still ye disobeyed.

"Make war no more!" proclaims a murderous gun;
And lo! what Christ's commandment hath not done
In twice a thousand years, is wrought in one.

August 19th, 1888.

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